

Wifi in Md. schools may put your kid at risk for cancer

By **Devra Lee Davis**

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Op-ed: Wifi in school may put your kid at risk for cancer.

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Thank you, Gov. **Larry Hogan**, for appointing thoughtful, brave medical experts to Maryland's Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (CEHPAC). Your next challenge is to get the Maryland school superintendents to heed the council's well-founded **advice**: reduce and restrict children's wireless radiation (wifi). With distinguished experts in child health, neurodevelopment and pediatrics, the council draws on the well-established public health principle that stopping harm now is always better and cheaper than trying to fix damage later.

The council **recommends** wired rather than wireless classroom networks. Why? All **wireless devices** from laptops to tablets to cell phones work as two-way microwave radiating radios. While weak in power, this radiation is absorbed into our bodies, far more deeply into children who are smaller with thinner skulls. Two decades ago when the FCC set "safety" standards, authorities assumed that microwave radiation was harmless unless it produced heat. Research on children's long-term effects was nonexistent. Today millions of children regularly use microwave radiating devices.

Recognizing this glaring deficiency, the U.S. Government Accountability Office in 2012 **advised** that FCC radiation test systems reflect these major changes in users and uses. So far, there has been no update to these obsolete standards.

Recent research from the acclaimed U.S. government NIH National Toxicology Program (NTP) proves that these "safety" assumptions about our wireless devices are gravely wrong. In the NTP **study** of 7,000 animals, rats were exposed in their short lifetimes to the equivalent radiation that humans experience. The NTP reported that significant numbers of radiation-exposed rats developed rare malignant **cancers** of the brain and heart, while unexposed controls did not develop a single such tumor. The NTP study includes an eerie

and troubling parallel: rats got the same types of cancers that have been found to significantly occur in **humans** after long term cell phone use.

At the **Baltimore Convention Center** last June, the Pediatric Academic Societies **showcased research** showing that children are more vulnerable than adults to microwave radiation, which can cause a host of serious **learning** and **behavioral** problems along with increasing cancer risk.

Six years ago, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer **classified** wireless as a possible human carcinogen — placing it in the same category as chloroform, DDT and various banned pesticides.

Subsequently, evidence of cancer risk has become far stronger. This January, independent expert scientists **convened** at the Israel Institute for Advanced Study at Hebrew University, founded by Albert Einstein, and concluded that wireless should now be deemed a likely human carcinogen. Weeks later, more experts **agreed**. Published research by Dr. Lennert Hardell, a Swedish oncologist and professor, **states** this radiation "should be regarded as a human carcinogen."

In response to the latest scientific findings, public health officials from California to Connecticut are developing guidelines for limiting exposures. In contrast, the Maryland Superintendents Association **is ignoring** calls to reduce wireless in schools from these and other health experts. Remarkably, Maryland school authorities have committed billions to new technology with no consideration for whether this puts children's health at risk or actually improves learning. In a letter opposing limits on radiation in schools, they argue that because devices are compliant with two-decade old FCC radiation guidelines (originally developed for adults), restrictions are "not necessary" to protect children.

Contrary to the Maryland superintendents' outdated safety assurances, the council's recommendation to restrict wireless radiation in schools rests in good company. The **American Academy of Pediatrics**, **Consumer Reports**, **obstetricians**, **medical associations** and **dozens of countries** recommend reducing children's exposures. **France**, **Israel** and **Cyprus** ban all wifi in young children's classrooms. Children can become digital citizens through wired connections and need not be surrounded by untested wifi.

Why then do American government websites not **reflect the latest science** from the NTP and others? As a Harvard Law Report **explains**: The FCC is a "captured agency," meaning under the influence of industry. The last FCC chairman was the chief lobbyist for the wireless industry. In 2014, the CDC **removed** cautionary recommendations and **concerns** about children and **hired** an industry consultant. **Analyses** of research show that results often depend on whether companies pay for the study. Dismissing the serious concerns of CEHPAC by name-calling their members "hypochondriacs" reflects the lack of scientific foundations of those

leveling that charge — who also happen to be **on the payroll** of the industry-connected group the American Council on Science and Health.

Would you give your child a cigar, a shot of Scotch or DDT to play with? By calling for wired connections, the 19 professional members of CEHPAC provide a clear message: It is indeed far better to prevent damage to our children and grandchildren than it would be to try to repair that harm once unloosed on future generations.

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